

**United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
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In Reply Refer To:  
1400-511.8 (HR-210)

April 4, 2000

EMS TRANSMISSION

Information Bulletin No. HR-2000-070

To: Servicing Personnel Offices

From: Director, National Human Resources Management Center

Subject: Classification Appeal Decision - Administrative Support Assistant, GS-303-06

Attached is the Bureau's Classification Appeal Decision. The decision results in the reclassification of the position from an Administrative Support Assistant, GS-303-06, to a Personnel Assistant, GS-203-06.

Please review all similar or like positions and apply the findings within this decision accordingly. Any questions pertaining to this decision may be addressed to Mark Whitesell, 303-236-6702.

Signed by:  
Linda D. Sedbrook  
Director

Authenticated by:  
Darlene Robitaille  
Secretary

1 Attachment  
1 - Classification Appeal Decision (8 pp)

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**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
CLASSIFICATION APPEAL DECISION**

**Appellant:** Xxxxx Xxxxx

**Location:** XXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXXXXX, XXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXXXXX, XXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXX

**Current Classification:** Administrative Support Assistant, GS-303-06

**Background:** The appellant has requested that she be upgraded to Administrative Support Assistant, GS-303-07. She bases her appeal for the upgrade on an accretion of duties that includes writing position descriptions (PDs), position analysis worksheets and rating plans; liaison between the field and state office; preparing various personnel reports and additional FPPS responsibilities. Her employee development work has increased to include coordination of all satellite downlinks for the field office and new employee training and other needs (required ethics training for all employees). In addition, she states that the XXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXXXXX as outlined in FOS purposed to standardize all position descriptions within Support Services to have similar duties and similar grades, but has not yet done so.

A telephone interview with the appellant was conducted November 15, 1999, and on November 19, with her supervisor XXXXX XXXXXXX. Additional contacts were made with the servicing personnel office to confirm desk audit and position description information.

The position description (PD) of record and the telephone interviews with the servicing personnel office, appellant and supervisor will be used to evaluate and classify the position. In addition, the appellant has submitted written information that will also be reviewed for the position evaluation.

The appellant is designated, a special emphasis program coordinator in the major duty statement. However, special emphasis program designations are to be assigned to an employee under a position description amendment form because the work is a voluntary collateral duty and cannot be considered a regular and continuing part of the position and is not grade controlling. Bureau policy dictates that special emphasis program work take no more than 20 percent of a position's work time, and can be removed at any time without impact on the title, series or grade of the position. Therefore, special emphasis program work will not be considered in the classification of this position

**References:** OPM Personnel Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-203, TS-75, November 1985; Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, December 1996; The Classifier's Handbook, December 1997

## DECISION

**Determination of Series and Title:** The position is located in the XXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXXXX, and provides support to the XXXXXXXX and XXXXXX XXXXX XXXXXXXX. Primary duties include a variety of personnel support services to a current staff of about 40 employees (FTE of 55) in the XXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXXXXXX and about 20 in the XXXXXXXX XXXXX XXXXXXXX. They fill 7-10 fire seasonal positions.

Except for the special emphasis program work that is not considered to be grade controlling, the work of the position is exclusively of a personnel clerical or assistance nature (staffing, employee benefits and awards, employee development, PD assistance).

To be considered an assistant, the work must have a limited technical nature requiring substantial practical knowledge of one or more civilian personnel management specialties such as staffing, employee relations, and classification. Personnel assistants are distinguished from clerks in that they do limited technical work such as searching out and organizing personnel subject-matter facts and weighing, measuring, or comparing facts of the case/situation being handled against established criteria. The appellant does perform limited technical work and therefore is titled, Personnel Assistant, GS-203.

**Determination of Grade Level:** The duties are evaluated for grade using the Factor Evaluation System (FES) nine factor Personnel Clerical and Assistance Series, Part II GS-203, and as necessary, the Primary Standard as found in the Introduction to the Classification Standards.

Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Our evaluation with respect to the nine FES factors follows.

**Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position:** The servicing personnel office has assigned Level 1-4, however, the appellant believes that this factor should be assigned Level 1-5. We agree with the servicing personnel office.

The position performs a broad range of personnel duties that includes, staffing, benefits, awards, and employee development, etc . . . The appellant advises supervisors on recruitment options available, provides selecting officials with advice concerning recruitment and selection. She assists the servicing personnel office as requested to rate and rank applications for employment and promotion actions based on selective and ranking factors. She assists in preparing and as necessary rewriting of position descriptions and position analyses and crediting plans. She utilizes the Federal Personnel/Payroll System (FPPS) for personnel action requests and the Specimen Management and Request Tracking system (SMART) to track fire personnel for random drug testing.

She advises and counsels both supervisors and employees on benefits. This includes personnel regulations and policies relating to job or career-related aspects of salary rates, within grade increases, salary protections, pay adjustment, hours of duty, savings bonds, leave donation,

health and life insurance benefits, merit promotion systems, Civil Service Retirement (CSRS) and Federal Employees Retirement (FERS) Systems, time and & attendance and resolving pay and leave problems. The appellant assists in resolving routine complaints, but problems with potential for grievances and appeals are referred to the appropriate officials or personnel specialist. She assists supervisors by referring to previous or standard disciplinary procedures and manuals. Warning letters to employees are written locally, but anything else usually requires state office assistance.

The appellant serves as the award and employee development coordinator. This includes keeping track of performance appraisal documents for submission to the State Office, coordinating and compiling the field office's training plans to include nominations for training and aids to identify trainees. She also coordinates satellite downlinks for the field office ensuring the logistical and technical reception for broadcasts. She monitors mandatory training such as the Bureau's annual ethics training. She does not teach courses in classroom settings, but uses teaching aids for her presentations, such as videos furnished specifically for the subject. She is responsible for the sign in sheets to confirm full employee participation for required/mandatory training.

Overall, the appellant is required to have knowledge of an extensive body of personnel rules, procedures or operations in order to perform a wide variety of interrelated personnel clerical work and resolve a wide range of problems. This matches Level 1-4, of Part II, which is the minimum level that can be awarded. Specific examples illustrated within Level 1-4 are as follows:

Classification: Interviews supervisors to determine that content of job warrants use of an IA position number; reviews competitive levels for discrepancies and adequacy of justifications; identifies criteria in standards and prepares questions to be asked on desk audits to elicit appropriate data; assists a team with applications of clerical standards by revising OPM benchmarks with agency data to prepare drafts of standardized position descriptions for reviewers; conduct random sample desk audits to determine currency of PD's and organization data; or write amendments to update duties.

Employee Development: Select trainees on the basis of relatedness of subject matter to the mission of the organization when courses are oversubscribed; identifies and contacts local subject-matter experts as last minute replacement instructors in recurring training programs; review catalogs and contacts libraries for suitable films for local training courses; ascertains that employees have prerequisites for courses; revise questionnaires to survey employee interests; interview interns and employees in upward mobility programs at various stages of development to verify progress, etc. and substitutes similar course to resolve conflicts in scheduling.

Employee Benefits: Fact-finds to investigate non-controversial cases by obtaining relevant facts, evaluating the adequacy of these facts in light of established precedents, and explains options available to the employee. For example, investigates and develops facts concerning on the job injuries or illnesses; processes routine claims which require identifying and substantiating relevant information in written narrative reports; explains options regarding leave for time off the job and compensation; write draft instructions concerning the Federal worker's compensation program.

Incentive Award Program: Review subject matter of suggestions for similarities to previous submissions and selects appropriate reviewing officials or to interview employees and supervisor to obtain additional information; to screen justifications for performance awards for factual documentation; to recommend an award dollar amount based on local precedent and regulations; to prepare summary descriptions of approved awards for publication; to compose letters outlining reason's committee did not recommend approval.

Staffing: Perform limited technical tasks involving recurring vacancies and readily understood kinds of work or lower grade positions, or screens' applicants for a variety of occupations on the basis of minimum experience and educational requirements. At this level, employees also interview supervisor to determine the adequacy of a previous job vacancy announcement and the nature of changes to be made; screens applications by determining minimum requirements are met including substituting education for general or specialized experience for initial entry on an applicant supply file, and evaluate the relative value of individual qualification's using specified factors to place applicants in rank order on a register used to fill a few kinds of related lower grade positions, e.g., promotion register for stenographers or clerks used to fill positions' installation wide.

These illustrations are a match to the work examples given above for the appellant.

In order to meet Level 1-5, there is a required practical knowledge of specialized personnel methods, regulations, principles, or concepts to carry out limited technical projects such as recommending changes to local personnel instructions; analyzing a variety of specific lower grade positions; and investigating minor employee complaints, problems, or infractions of rules. At this level, interviewing, analytical, and writing skills are used in connection with moderately complex personnel subjects and techniques. Also, at this level, the employee is expected to classify a variety of lower grade clerical and/or technical positions; make classroom presentations; resolve minor employee relations problems or perform recurring types of technical work for the purpose of contributing to the satisfactory production, motivation, morale, or discipline of employees. Finally, in the staffing process, the employee is expected to interpret qualification standards for a variety of clerical and technical occupations by identifying major duties or type of work in jobs being filled and the kind of applicant experience/education, or to rate applications for employment or promotion to various lower grade positions (e.g., through GS-09) on the basis of selective and ranking factors in a crediting plan. The appellant does not perform work at this level.

Factor Level 1-4 is credited for a total of 550 points.

**Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls:** The servicing personnel office and the appellant agree that Level 2-3 is appropriate.

Her supervisor states that the appellant has considerable freedom to perform her work, and he said that he has a great deal of confidence in the appellant capabilities to perform her work assignments. She is allowed a high level of independence.

A comparison of GS-203, Part II, Level 2-2 and the appellant's level of supervision indicates that

the appellant's supervisor does not provide guidance on continuing assignments, indicating what is to be done, quantity expected, deadlines, and priority of work. Nor does the supervisor provide additional, specific instructions for new, difficult, or special projects, including suggesting work methods or advice on the availability of materials as described at Level 2-2. Therefore, the position exceeds Level 2-2.

At Level 2-3 the supervisor defines objectives, priorities, and deadlines, and assists the employee with unusual situations that do not have clear precedents. The employee plans and carries out the successive steps and handles problems and deviations in accordance with instructions, policies, previous training, or accepted practices. Completed work is evaluated for technical soundness, appropriateness, and conformity to policy and requirements. Methods used to arrive at the end results are not reviewed in detail.

Verbiage found in the PD of record indicates that the appellant receives general instructions and priorities from the supervisor and performs her daily assignments within established policy, using judgement to complete the work, informing the supervisor of work in progress and any sensitive/controversial issues. It should also be noted that the servicing personnel office is available for questions and referrals of sensitive/controversial issues. This description is an equitable match to Level 2-3.

The GS-203 Standard does not contain criteria for Level 2-4; in cases such as this the Primary Standard is referenced to evaluate work at this level. The position fails to meet Level 2-4 of the Primary Standard in that at this level, the employee and supervisor together develop deadlines, projects, and work to be done. The appellant does not have this higher level of participation in her work assignments.

Factor Level 2-3 is credited for a total of 275 points.

**Factor 3 - Guidelines:** The servicing personnel office has assigned Level 3-2, however, the appellant disagrees and believes this factor should be assigned Level 3-3. We agree with the servicing personnel office.

Level 3-1 is exceeded as this level reflects instances where guidelines are specific and detailed.

Deviations must be approved by, or channeled through, the supervisor. The appellant exceeds this level.

At Level 3-2 guidelines are available such as work samples, instructions on personnel forms that are being processed, health benefits brochures, job vacancy or training course announcements, merit promotion plans, Federal Personnel Manual issuance's and agency directives, technical manuals, State Office and local policies. The employee selects the proper guide, which may include determining which of several alternatives to use. When existing guides were not available, a higher graded member of the staff resolved the problem.

The PD of record states that the appellant selects, applies and interprets the guidelines as they relate to the field office and individuals, which is an equitable match to Level 3-2.

Level 3-3 describes guides that have criteria or precedents, which apply generally, but not specifically, to the situation/case being resolved. At this level the assistant may use laws and regulations pertaining to a personnel specialty, classification and grading standards, Comptroller General Decisions, etc. The appellant notes that she uses “classification and grading standards, guides for writing position descriptions on a recurring basis and does on-line research through the Internet” to support her request for Level 3-3. She also states that she uses the qualification standards on a recurring basis. While the appellant may use these guides as references on a recurring basis, she would not use them as required to meet Level 3-3.

At this level, the appellant would be expected to use and *adapt* the guides which are not completely applicable to the work, to use judgement in interpreting and adapting guides that include agency policies, regulations, precedents, and work directions, and analyze results and recommend changes. Level 3-3 is typical of personnelists and technicians with delegated authority who use the classification and qualification standards to write and classify position descriptions and qualify applicants, i.e., up to GS-09 positions.

Factor Level 3-2 is credited for a total of 125 points.

**Factor 4 - Complexity:** The servicing personnel office and the appellant agree that Level 4-3 is appropriate.

At Level 4-3, the work consists of different and unrelated processes and method such as is normally required for some full range official personnel actions for a block of assigned organizations.

Decisions regarding what needs to be done involve many considerations in a variety of different situations which require different treatments. Official personnel actions pertain to interrelated aspects of employment and involve additional procedures for different personnel purposes such as security investigations, payroll deductions, health insurance, life insurance, retirement, unemployment compensations, medical records, license renewals, etc.

The appellant’s work is an equitable match to Level 4-3. Her work consists of a wide variety of different and unrelated processes. She assists and advises supervisors and employees on staffing, benefits, awards, employee development, recruitment options, writing PDs, etc. Her benefits advise includes the full range of salary rates, within grade increases, salary protection, pay adjustment, hours of duty, health and life insurance, retirement, etc.

The appellant’s work exceeds Level 4-2 in that her work consists of considerably more than a variety of related steps, processes, or methods in a personnel function.

Factor Level 4-4 is not met as that level includes the assessment of unusual circumstances, variations in approach, and incomplete or conflicting data. The work requires making many decisions concerning such things as interpretation of considerable data, to include the refinement of the methods and techniques to be used. The work as performed by the appellant does not match the complexity as described within this level.

Factor Level 4-3 is credited for a total of 150 points.

**Factor 5 - Scope and Effect:** The servicing personnel office and the appellant agree that Level 5-2 is appropriate.

Level 5-2 best describes the work of the position because the appellant's work primarily involves the execution and/or explanation of personnel rules, regulations, or procedures. The accuracy and reliability affect the accuracy and reliability of further processes and personnel actions.

Level 5-1 is exceeded in that at this level the work performed is of a limited, repetitive, or closely related nature having the effect of saving time for other members of the staff, and having little impact beyond their office.

Level 5-3 is not met. The scope of the work described for that level includes rating employees for promotion, and applying a variety of standards in determining series, titles, and grades. The appellant is not required to perform at that level in any of the personnel functions.

The effect of work is similarly not met as is describing work that has a direct effect upon employee training, pay, selection for jobs, etc. As stated above, the appellant does not regularly and routinely classify jobs, nor rate and rank rosters for selection, and therefore does not meet the full intent of effect as described within Level 5-3.

Factor Level 5-2 is credited for a total of 75 points.

**Factor 6 - Personal Contacts:** The servicing personnel office and the appellant agree that Level 6-2 is appropriate.

At Level 6-2, contacts are with all levels of employees, supervisors, and administrative staffs in the organization services or in support facilities located in the same geographic area or in regional, district, or field offices. This is an equitable match to the appellant's contacts.

Level 6-1 is exceeded because at this level contacts with the general public are limited to very highly structured situations which is not the case in the appellant's contacts.

Factor Level 6-2 is credited for a total of 25 points.

**Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts:** The servicing personnel office assigned Level 7-1, however the appellant disagrees and believes this factor should be assigned Level 7-2. We agree with the appellant.

At Level 7-2, the purpose of the contacts is to initiate personal contacts and follow through on work efforts to resolve problems or obtain cooperation of others. On occasion considerable tact, patience, and skill may be required when dealing with irate or uninformed individuals.

Level 7-1 is exceeded because at this level, the purposes of the contacts are limited to clarifying, or giving facts or information directly related to the work situation.

Factor Level 7-2 is credited for a total of 50 points.

**Factor 8 - Physical Demands:** The servicing personnel office and the appellant agree that Level 8-1 is appropriate.

The position requires some physical effort such as moving around the office or visiting other offices, but there are no special physical demands such as those found at Level 8-2.

Factor Level 8-1 is credited for a total of 5 points.

**Factor 9 - Work Environment:** The servicing personnel office and the appellant agree that Level 9-1 is appropriate. The work of the position is performed primarily in an office setting.

Factor Level 9-1 is credited for a total of 5 points.

Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position	Level 1-4	550 points
Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls	Level 2-3	275 points
Factor 3 - Guidelines	Level 3-2	125 points
Factor 4 - Complexity	Level 4-3	150 points
Factor 5 - Scope and Effect	Level 5-2	75 points
Factor 6 - Personal Contacts	Level 6-2	25 points
Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts	Level 7-2	50 points
Factor 8 - Physical Demands	Level 8-1	5 points
Factor 9 - Work Environment	Level 9-1	5 points
	Total	1260 points

**Conclusion:**

Total points of 1260 assigned to this position falls within the point range of 1105-1350, which converts, to GS-06.

**Classification:**

Personnel Assistant, GS-203-06

Interviews conducted by Shirley Girard.

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Mark Whitesell  
Supervisory Personnel Management Specialist